

**WASHINGTON. D.C.** – House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Ranking Member Darrell Issa (R-CA) and Rep. Anh “Joseph” Cao (R-LA) [sent a letter today](#)

to the panels’ Chairman Edolphus “Ed” Towns (D-NY) highlighting “new concerns brought to the attention of Committee staff during a recent visit to the Gulf area” and requesting that he broaden the scope of the Committee’s investigation to examine “how the federal government plans to handle the unique challenges this disaster faced with the backdrop of the 2010 hurricane season.”

“The formation of Tropical Storm Alex off the coast of Cuba should focus our attention on how hurricanes could severely complicate efforts to fight the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico,” they wrote. “During our visit to New Orleans, staff members from both the Majority and Minority heard first hand the concerns of local officials over whether the Administration is prepared to respond to the unique challenges of the 2010 hurricane season. Local officials are worried that a tropical event will complicate clean up efforts while oil is still in the Gulf. In addition to environmental damage, these leaders foresee a bureaucratic showdown between BP and the federal government over who is responsible for clean up and removal of oil soaked debris.”

In a phone interview on June 24, 2010, Plaquemines Parish President Billy Nungesser stated unequivocally that Administration officials had neither spoken with him, nor sought his opinion on how responsibilities would be allocated between the federal government and BP in the event that oil is brought onshore by a tropical event.

The lawmakers also noted that “an official from St. Bernard Parish spoke of the unimaginable destruction and chaos that could be inflicted on the region, as fierce winds and high tides threaten to fling oil across Gulf Coast communities. You will recall that St. Bernard Parish was flooded in the wake of Katrina, with only 5 of its 27,000 homes untouched by Katrina’s flood waters.”

This weather system is just one of many that could inflict chaos on the Gulf States in what is predicted to be a very active hurricane season. Experts are predicting between 15 and 16 named storms, 6 to 8 hurricanes and 3 to 5 major hurricanes. Some experts have warned that meteorological conditions mirror 2005, the year of Hurricane Katrina.

They concluded, “As this Committee is charged with overseeing the effectiveness and adequacy of federal operations, it is our obligation to ensure the federal response to the worst environmental disaster in our history is adequate and comprehensive. The Administration has a narrow window of opportunity to be proactive in its response and immediate leadership in this area is critical.”

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